

Homily

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Fr Danny

“If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” It is easy for us to disregard the voice and calling of God in our world today. As I have mentioned the past few weeks, we tend to either be so focused on our task at hand as Martha was last weekend, or we are too busy, “naval gazing”, allowing our personal vanities to guide our actions, instead of listening to where God is calling us.

Today, through all of the scriptural passages that we have been gifted with for this Mass, there is a theme that I want to really focus on. God is calling each one of us to take a good look at ourselves and if we are doing something that only benefits us, He is telling us to “stop it!” Don’t focus only on ourselves. To stop placing our own personal perspectives over what’s really going on in the world over objective realities. To stop trying to find truths that work just for us, and in the end really are just rationalizations that make life easier to live, because they don’t challenge us to step out of ourselves. To stop looking at others as the problem, but instead to look at how culpable we are for how we have allowed society to continue to disintegrate to what is before us today.

I was reading in the news this morning that today marks 252 mass killings this calendar year. We’re only on day 212, my brothers and sisters. Mass killing, as they defined it was shooting of more than 4 people that ended in death. Most of you saw what happened last night in El Paso, but then we had another shooting this morning in Dayton Ohio. We had the Walmart shootings last week. When is enough enough, my brothers and sisters?

Christ is offering us some tough lessons today, My brothers and sisters! But since we died with Christ through Baptism, we are being called to a higher calling. To leave behind the monotony, the same old same old and cheap answers that the world provides, and to raise our gaze to the heavens to see where the Lord is calling us to go, and how it is that He is calling us to live.

One of my favorite verses from scripture to quote is from our first reading today from Ecclesiastes. "Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity." Growing up, in my house that was a most common phrase. As teenagers, my older brother and myself thought the world revolved around us. So many times my dad would come to us: "Vanity of vanities, Danny." Yes I know, Ecclesiastes 1:1!

We all, at times, fall into vanity. I like such and such, and because of that, I'm going to do things the way that I prefer because, "It's all about me!" Now most times, we won't actually say this out loud quite that way, but our actions speak louder than our words at these moments! Because we want to take the easiest path for ourselves, and don't want to put any real work into what we are doing, we want to take the path of least resistance, and most times this is the reason why we fall to sin, and have those "pet sins", that we just can't seem to get passed!

With our mouths we say that we want to love God with our whole hearts, with all of our soul with all of our strength but, many times, we are too busy loving ourselves, that we don't want to make the changes required to put God first! Because if we put God, or our fellow man ahead of our own well-being, we will have to make sacrifices, and why make sacrifices when we can have everything that we want? Why make sacrifices if I am taken care of, and have a good job, and a roof over my head, food on the table, I can pay my rent this

month? Obviously, God wants me to keep doing what I'm doing, because He has set me up with what I have, and besides, didn't Jesus do enough sacrificing for us? I mean, He took upon Himself our sins, on the cross. Wasn't that enough sacrifice for all of us? why do I then, need to sacrifice?

Now, I realize that to some of you this may sound absurd, but to the vast majority of us, this is how we act at times, whether we realize it or not! We want things to get done, but we don't want to be the ones that actually do them, because that takes effort! We want resolutions to our problems, but we don't want to find them or work on them because it takes too much time, and we have something better to do right now. Like watch tv, or play a game or there's something on the radio! Why put forth this effort? We want the world to have peace, but we are too busy dealing with the world that revolves around us, that when it comes to the world outside our doors, we are just too busy or too tired, too frustrated, too angry, to put any effort into it!

But God is calling us to something more! "Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its Creator." This is a challenge issued to us by God through St. Paul! That since we don't live for this world, because we have been Baptized into the death of Christ, which opens for us the gates of the world to come, that we are to do everything for the greater glory of God, not for the greater glory of the almighty me or I! This then calls us to live for the other. To live seeking relationship!

Because to have a relationship, a healthy relationship, we cannot think of just ourselves, and we cannot have a firm, healthy relationship without genuine human interaction. We cannot think about how our actions only affect us, but instead how our actions affect everyone who is around us, not just those closest to us, but everyone!

There is a principle of Catholic Social Teaching called Solidarity. This principle calls us to think not only of ourselves, and our experiences, but of the experiences of all that have been created by the same God in His image and likeness! As St. John Paul II put it, “We are all one family in the world. Building a community that empowers everyone to attain their full potential through each of us respecting each other's dignity, rights and responsibilities makes the world a better place to live.”

We are quick to judge others for infringing on our rights, but we aren't quite as quick to live up to the responsibilities that are attributed to those said rights! It is easier to place blame on someone that is challenging me, then to take responsibility for my actions. This too, is vanity because it is all about me, and not about we, as the Body of Christ!

But since we are all members of the body of Christ, personal vanity has no right to dwell in our hearts. If vanity dwells in our hearts, then we are not allowing Christ, of Whose body we are a part of, to dwell within us. We are instead allowing personal opinion, judgmental rhetoric, and divisive words to pit “us” against “them.”

And God said, “You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?” If the words that Christ spoke to the rich man in today's Gospel were spoken to you, what would your

response be? I pray that we may all be able to hear the words that Christ is offering to each of us today, and not allow our hearts to be hardened any longer, but instead to be open to the love and will of God!

So if today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.